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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 3919  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1408  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JUN 5199  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9743  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2604  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 2437  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 000816

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [PE](#)  
SUBJECT: AMAZON PROTESTS: STATE OF PLAY

REF: A. LIMA 0810  
[1](#)B. LIMA 0795  
[1](#)C. LIMA 0794  
[1](#)D. LIMA 0793  
[1](#)E. LIMA 0777

Classified By: Ambassador P. Michael McKinley for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: As of June 9, an uneasy calm prevailed in Bagua in anticipation of the announced indefinite, nationwide strike scheduled to begin on June 11. Meanwhile, Aidesep leader Alberto Pizango has sought refuge in the Nicaraguan Embassy, and Minister for Women's Affairs Carmen Vildoso has resigned over the GOP's handling of the protests. The Prime Minister and the Interior Minister appeared June 8 before Congress to explain the events that led up to the bloody events of June 5. As negotiations have stalled, the GOP is seeking a strategy to resolve the crisis. End Summary.

#### Situation in Bagua and Beyond

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[1](#)2. (C) On June 9. Embassy civilian and military contacts in Bagua Grande told us that the situation in town and the surrounding area is "practically normal," with the exception of the 3pm to 6am curfew in effect. The Fernando Belaunde Terry highway from Chiclayo (on the coast) to Bagua is now open, but the highway beyond that -- to Tarapoto and Yurimaguas -- remains blocked by protesters. In a show of authority (or magnanimousness), protestors in that area have set aside two two-hour periods per day to allow supplies to get through. More ominous, according to one contact, is the nationwide strike scheduled to begin on June 11. He said that Amazonian leaders met in Tarapoto on June 10 to plan the strike, and claimed the plan had the backing of highland indigenous, labor union and social sectors in other parts of Peru.

#### Pizango Seeks Asylum In Nicaraguan Embassy

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[1](#)3. (U) Meanwhile, President of the Inter-Ethnic Development Association of the Peruvian Jungle (Aidesep), Alberto Pizango, who had gone into hiding after the GOP issued a warrant for his arrest for "inciting violence," resurfaced June 8. Initial reports that he had sought refuge and political asylum in the Nicaraguan Embassy were confirmed June 9. The Government of Nicaragua formally granted Pizango asylum later in the day. (Pizango's absence has complicated GOP efforts to negotiate formally with Amazon community representatives, who lack the authority to represent their

communities.)

Minister Vildoso Resigns

¶4. (C) According to news reports, Minister for Women's Affairs Carmen Vildoso resigned in protest of the Government's handling of negotiations that led up to the bloody clashes in Bagua. There has been speculation that this may be the first in a series of cabinet changes resulting from the recent violence. Many observers have noted that PM Simon had very visibly taken the lead of the government's negotiation efforts over the past several weeks, partly in order better to take the hit should the efforts fail. In public statements and in paid pull-outs in several June 8 dailies, President Garcia blamed the violence on the terrorist actions of a radical group clearly supported by outside agitators. Unclear What Next

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¶5. (C) During heated June 8 Congressional hearings, PM Simon admitted some responsibility in the deaths of the 24 police officers, saying he he had ordered them to clear the highway without sufficient force protection. But Simon also maintained that he had always been open to holding talks with leaders of native communities, but that their main spokesperson, Alberto Pizango, had refused to negotiate. (Note: Simon has the signed documents to prove his assertion. End Note.) For her part, Interior Minister Cabanillas criticized the media for distorting the veracity of events in Bagua and for blaming police for the violence that broke out on June 5th, when the opposite was true. (An international NGO close to AIDSEP and Embassy contacts in Bagua assert that indigenous Army veterans or "reservistas" -- some who fought in the 1995 Cenepa conflict with Ecuador -- began the shooting.)

¶6. (C) Comment: As negotiations have stalled, the GOP is casting about for a strategy to resolve the crisis. Some call for the participation of the Human Rights Ombudsman's office, others for the Church, and yet others for the already existing "National Accord (Acuerdo Nacional) to assume greater responsibility in resolving the crisis. Some outside critics have faulted Congress for avoiding its responsibilities and believe the issue will inexorably land in the legislative branch in the near future (septel). End Comment.  
MCKINLEY